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NOTES FROM THE MEDICAL PRESS

IN CHARGE OF

ELISABETH ROBINSON SCOVIL

THE RÖNTGEN TREATMENT OF ECZEMA. Eczema, which, as a celebrated German authority has said "stands first in frequency amongst skin diseases for which advice is sought," has been successfully treated by means of the X-ray. Dr. Mulford R. Fisher reports, in the *Medical Record*, the results in sixty-two cases. One, a nurse, had acute fissured eczema with marked inflammatory reaction of the surrounding skin. This was much relieved by only one application and practically disappeared after four exposures. The condition may recur but yields readily to treatment.

BLOOD PRESSURE AND ALTITUDE. In answer to a question, the Journal of the American Medical Association says the normal blood-pressure may be stated as an average of 127 for males of all ages and 120 for females. The blood pressure tends to rise with age, so that a pressure considerably above the average, at the age of 60, might not be abnormal. The blood pressure is diminished with altitude, the difference at 6000 feet being about 5mm. Long residence at high altitude tends to make it return to nearly the normal figures.

ANESTHETIC FOR DELIVERY. The same journal in the synopsis of a paper in a German contemporary says that up to the present no means is known of rendering delivery painless which is not to some extent dangerous. Scopolomin is so unsafe on account of its effect on the respiratory centre of the fetus that it has been abandoned by some practitioners.

WARD COOLING SYSTEM. *The American Journal of Surgery* reports the success of a small ward cooling system established at the Mount Sinai Hospital, New York, the past summer. A ward holding four cribs, occupied by children suffering from gastro-enteritis, was supplied with 250 cubic feet of fresh cooled air per minute. Out-door air was forced by an electric fan through a water chamber, the water in which was cooled by brine coils, and then through a short duct into the ward, where the cooled air entered near the floor level. A transom, regulated by the nurse, allowed the warmer strata of air to escape near the top of the room, ensuring proper circulation. The room was cooled to 70° on a very humid day when the outside temperature was 93°. The cost of operating was estimated at \$1 per day per patient. The per capita cost would be less for a larger ward.

OPIATES IN CHILDHOOD. *The Medical Record* notes that nursing rabbits are twice as sensitive with respect to opium and morphine as adult animals, for each kilogram of body weight. The susceptibility to codeine is the same at all ages.

THE VENEREAL PERIL. *The Journal of the American Medical Association* commenting upon the proceedings of the Seventeenth International Medical Congress recently held in London, with an attendance of 8000 members, says that the Congress passed a resolution urging the governments of all the nations represented at the Congress to institute confidential notification of syphilis to a sanitary authority and to make systematic provision for the diagnosis and treatment of all cases not otherwise provided for. The British government has acquiesced in the proposition.

VIVISECTION. The following resolution was passed by the Congress: Experiments on living animals have proved of the utmost service to mankind in the past and are indispensable to its future progress, and accordingly, while deprecating the infliction of unnecessary pain, it is of opinion, alike in the interests of man and of animals, that every facility should be given to competent persons for the performance of such experiments under competent supervision.

In a brilliant address in surgery an emphatic protest was made against restrictive legislation which would seriously impede, if it did not entirely arrest, the progress of medical knowledge.

THE BOWELS IN OPERATIONS. *The American Journal of Surgery* protests against too thorough purging in preparation for a laparotomy, as it contributes to post-operative distress. A simple laxative or an enema is sufficient for most cases, even these can often be dispensed with. Urgent cases, operated upon without preparation usually do as well, as far as the bowels are concerned, as those previously purged. The best routine management of the bowels after operation is to let them alone. An enema on the third or fourth day is usually all that is needed.

ORAL SEPSIS. In a paper published in the *Medical Record* Dr. Francis P. Kinnicutt expresses his belief that many slight, ill-defined disturbances of health as well as grave systemic conditions may be traced to oral sepsis. Dental caries concealed by capping, bridging and other modern devices of dentistry, may set up serious infection in the body, accompanied by fever and other severe symptoms. Gingivitis, or inflammation of the gums, pyorrhoea alveolaris and even an alveolar abscess may be present without the patient being aware of the condition of the mouth, or the physician recognizing its bearing on the symptoms he is called upon to treat.

POSITION IN PERITONITIS. *The American Journal of Surgery* says that in the treatment of peritonitis Fowler's position should not be reserved for post-operative cases, but be used as soon as the diagnosis is made. Merely raising the head of the bed is not as satisfactory as propping the patient up in bed.

THE MENSTRUAL TEMPERATURE CURVE *The Journal of the American Medical Association*, quoting from a German contemporary, says, before puberty and after the menopause the temperature runs on a constant level, as in men, with very slight fluctuations. Menstruation brings a temperature wave rising high just before the menses and falling below normal afterwards, beginning to rise again about two weeks before the date of the following menstruation. This is important in estimating conditions in disease.

ALCOHOL IN INFECTIOUS DISEASES. A writer in a Berlin medical journal describes alcohol as absolutely useless in acute or chronic infectious diseases to reduce temperature, destroy bacteria, or as a hypnotic. It reduces the resisting power of the blood. A single dose as food is futile and its continued use harmful. In chronic tuberculosis egg nog and alcoholic drinks breed gastric catarrh and reduce the patient's power of digestion and assimilation. In severe collapse the stimulating effect of alcohol may prove useful, but other drugs as camphor, strychnine, caffeine, etc., answer as well. Pneumonia is more prevalent and more fatal among hard drinkers than among abstainers.

PROPHYLAXIS OF SCARLET FEVER AND MEASLES. A writer in the same journal thinks that these infectious diseases are spread by inhalation. He made children who had been exposed to them wear a bag around the neck that had been soaked in eucalyptus oil, thus constantly inhaling the fumes, while they were also disseminated in the air of the room. The children also inhaled daily a 30 or 50 per cent solution of lime, aqua calsis, to sterilize the throat. These measures were kept up for six weeks.

PROTECTION OF THE HANDS. A German surgeon advocates smearing the hands with petrolatum after they have been scrubbed, rinsed in alcohol and dried. The microbes are caught in the petrolatum and washed off in the warm water when the hands are washed. The petrolatum can be medicated with boric acid. Gloves are liable to tear, while this method offers complete protection to the hands.